

IMAGINE...

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**The Role of Higher Education Institutes in  
 Supporting the Emerging Irish Social  
 Enterprise Sector: A Lifelong Learning  
 Agenda**

**Dr Mary Fenton**

## Defining Social Enterprise



A Social Enterprise is an enterprise whose objective is to achieve a social, societal or environmental impact, rather than maximising profit for its owners or shareholders.



It pursues its objectives by trading on an ongoing basis through the provision of goods and/or services, and by reinvesting surpluses into achieving social objectives.



It is governed in a fully accountable and transparent manner and is independent of the public sector. If dissolved, it should transfer its assets to another organisation with a similar mission.

# Irish Social Enterprise Ecosystem



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- ✓ Emerging sector delivering important economic and social returns across a spectrum of activities
- ✓ Potential to create up to 40,000 jobs and contribute €2 billion to the Irish economy (CPA Ireland, 2018)
- ✓ Limited empirical research on the scale, scope and impact of SE
- ✓ National Social Enterprise Policy has given visibility and legitimacy to the SE sector
- ✓ Implementation of policy needs a multi-faceted approach by key stakeholders: Government Departments, State Agencies, HEIs, Media, Activists etc.



# What Social Enterprises need Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to do?



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## What Social Enterprises need Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to do?



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### Institutional Commitment

- Formal acknowledgement of SE in Institutional Strategy and Priorities
- Encouraging cross-institutional working group on SE

### Inclusion in Curricula

- Explore scope for further inclusion of SE in HEI Curricula through applied student projects linked to SE's and student placements
- Development of case studies - best practice/exemplars in SE

### Create Communities of Practice

- Real value in sharing information and experience
- Quarterly workshops

## What Social Enterprises need Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to do?



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### Research

- World-class SE ecosystem relies on cutting-edge research particularly in Impact Measurement
- Collaborating with SE's to access research funding through research partnerships

### Access to Academic Staff and Facilities

- Broker relationships with Government Agencies, Private Sector, Philanthropists, Diaspora, Alumni, EU;
- Provide pathways to and information on available funding and financing supports
- Assisting SE's by evaluating funding proposals
- Access to incubation space; accelerator programmes and other relevant facilities

### Staff CPD

- Accredited CPD programmes
- Lifelong Learning Opportunities

# Social Enterprise: A Lifelong Learning Agenda



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## Creating a SE Community of Practice

- Informal network of academics and SE stakeholders; Guest Speakers; Case Studies

## Developing a SE Leadership Academy

- Capacity building of SE Staff through accredited lifelong learning
- Accelerator Programme: Providing Incubation Space for Social Entrepreneurs

## Signposting HEI's Facilities and Staff to Social Entrepreneurs

## Applied Postgraduate Research

## Disseminating Research

Thank You

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